

K Bill Allen Chevrolet Photograph Collection, 1927-1965
0614 0.25 cubic feet

This collection is available at [The State Historical Society of Missouri-Research Center, Kansas City](http://www.shsmo.org). If you would like more information, please contact us at kansascity@shsmo.org.

INTRODUCTION

The records of the Bill Allen Chevrolet Photograph Collection contain exterior and interior images of Bill Allen's auto shop in North Kansas City, Missouri, as well as unidentified employees, businessmen, and automobiles.

DONOR INFORMATION

The photographs were donated to the State Historical Society of Missouri by Dale Monaghan on August 5, 2009 (Accession No. KA1730).

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The Donor has given and assigned to the University all rights of copyright which the Donor has in the Materials and in such of the Donor's works as may be found among any collections of Materials received by the University from others.

INSTITUTIONAL SKETCH

In 1920, William R. Allen, Sr. became involved in the business world selling musical instruments, sheet music, and Victrolas in Independence, Missouri. He went on to establish a Chevrolet dealership in North Kansas City in 1933. The business was originally housed in a single building at 100 Armour Road. The company expanded in 1945 with a two-million-dollar motor car sales and service structure across the street on Armour Road and Buchanan Street. The building, designed by architect Edward Fuller, featured a "Visual Front," an innovative way of displaying new cars. In addition to a new car display room, truck department, and service room, the building also contained the largest stock of Chevrolet parts in the Midwest. The former building became the home of the Paint & Body Department of Allen Chevrolet, Inc. In addition, an appliance and tire shop was located at 1711 Swift.

Allen turned over active management to his son, William R. Allen, Jr., who owned and operated the firm for 35 years until his retirement and sale of business in 1988. Born in Independence in 1921, Allen graduated from North Kansas City High School, and was active in the North Kansas City business community, sitting on boards of the North Kansas City State Bank and Chamber of Commerce. He was affiliated with the American Royal and attended the University of Kansas. He and his wife, Wilma, had two sons, William R. Allen III and F. Robert Allen. In 1955, Wilma was murdered in her car during an attempted robbery that shocked the North Kansas City community. Her killer was brought to justice months later. Allen remarried in 1960 to Karin Allen and died in 2007.

The Allen Chevrolet building still stands, but is now home to several businesses including Jim's Discount Tire and Brake and Johnny's Backyard.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection spans 1927 to 1965, with the majority of materials from 1940s-1950s, and offers an account of the automobile industry at that time. There are 113 photographs, mostly 8x10, and one color postcard, in this collection. Additional material includes an advertisement from *Motor Age* magazine in 1947 by a glass company highlighting the display case used at Allen's dealership and a 1945 article from *The Kansas City Star* detailing the expansion of Allen's business. The photographs are arranged by subject. Most photographs were not identified or dated.

PREFERRED CITATION:

Specific item; box number; folder number; *Bill Allen Chevrolet Photograph Collection, c. 1927-c. 1965 (K0614)*; The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Kansas City [after first mention may be abbreviated to SHSMO-KC].

FOLDER LIST

- f. 1 Publicity, new building, 1945-1947
- f. 2 Car dealer conferences, committees, 1927-1939, n.d.
- f. 3 Company holiday parties, 1951, n.d.
- f. 4 Promotional events, n.d.
- f. 5 Unidentified businessmen, ground breaking, n.d.
- f. 6 Employees, parts and accessories, radio service, n.d.
- f. 7 Auto shop, interior, n.d.
- f. 8 Auto shop, interior & exterior, c. 1947, n.d.
- f. 9 Showroom, lobby & office, 1965, n.d.
- f. 10 Sales, n.d.
- f. 11 Car & truck lots, n.d.
- f. 12 Allen's Paint & Body; Allen Tire and Supply, n.d.
- f. 13 Building, exterior, n.d.
- f. 14 Building, exterior at night, n.d.
- f. 15 Aerial, n.d.
- f. 16 Miscellaneous, n.d.

LOCATION NOTE

Materials in this collection are stored offsite and will need to be retrieved before viewing.

SUBJECTS

Automobile dealers – Kansas City – Missouri
Automobile industry and trade
Automobiles – Marketing

Processed July 2016